Fowl Feathered Review
№ 235

ISSUE № 235: The Brooklyn Funk Edition

About the Assemblage

The FFR is no longer a journal or even a "Necrosign." It's a shared frequency—specifically the sound of a 1988 Mitsubishi Mirage idling in a parking lot at 3:00 AM. We don't curate; we just leave the back door unlocked. We are a collection of "important locals"—those who are durable because we are too tired to be fragile. If the work feels like it's trying to be "Art," we will likely use it to level a wobbly table.

The Staff (The Custodians of the Sink)

- Virgil Kay: Still the Final Arbiter, currently preoccupied with the aerodynamics of a falling bagel.
- Silent Bill: Promoted to *Chief of Tactical Non-Sequiturs*. He handles the "Necessary Pauses" by simply walking out of the room mid-sentence.
- Unkie Bob: Now specializing in *Casual Entropy*. He doesn't sabotage the structure

anymore; he just forgets to tighten the bolts.

- The Unnamed Dishwasher: (Not on the masthead). He just crashed in. He's wearing a windbreaker. He's currently scrubbing a scorched pot with the intensity of a man performing heart surgery. Don't look at him. He's the soul of the operation now.

THE PERPETUAL PENDING PLEDGE:

The Review is not for sale; it is freely given. All incoming funds are Sacramental Offerings consecrated not for service rendered, but to sustain the metabolically necessary Obsession8888. Our official registry is no longer numeric; it is an unassailable frequency defined as Vi · ∞ · 432Hz.

SUBMISSION PROTOCOL (CASUAL MODE)

1. The Work: Send us 2 to 953 fragments. They can be poems, paintings, or transcriptions of overheard arguments about bowling.
2. The Presentation: No "Cover Letters" listing your awards. We don't care where you went to school; we care if you can

stand up after taking a hit. Tell us your favorite type of industrial fastener instead.

3. The Offering: The Perpetual Pending Pledge remains. It's still free. But if you must send something, send a 12-inch sandwich.
    - The Kewpie Clause: If there is no Kewpie Mayonnaise on the sandwich, Virgil will use your manuscript to wipe the counter. Kewpie is the only thing standing between us and the "Absolute Cosmic-Cluck."
4. The Delivery: Drop it off. Or don't. The auction is never over, and we're just waiting for the next honk.

Note: If you hear the sound of dishes clattering in the back, ignore it. It's just the frequency of the house.

🐓Digital Park and Ride: Send to fowlpoxpress@mail2poet.com

🐓Physical Park and Ride: 250.50∞ State Street, Bangor, Maine, 04401. *ERRATUM: If the 432Hz frequency sounds more like a rattling heat shield on a compact car, do not adjust your ears. The rattling is the poetry. The 9-volt battery is dead. Long live the 9-volt battery.*

"Non ignora mali, miseris succurrere disco."
— Virgil, The Aeneid

BLOODSTREAM

By Libby W. Cochran

They discovered the pages the way archaeologists discover a city—by accident, through a crack in something already ruined. A photocopied sheaf lay in a café drawer, oil-stained, margins crowded with two incompatible handwritings. One impatient and slanted. The other precise, almost devotional. The disagreement between them felt productive, like friction that generated heat rather than damage. Whoever had annotated the text seemed less interested in rewriting than in following its internal pulse, rearranging emphasis, inserting connective tissue where emotion demanded it, letting the narrative breathe through association instead of structure.

The red Mirage was already vibrating before the key turned. A tremor without cause. Dashboard lights bloomed like radioactive flowers. Someone's breathing sounded too loud in the cabin, though no one had been introduced yet. The shaking wheel echoed the tightening of titanium screws against bone, engine misfire and surgical drill sharing a rhythm that made the body feel like a machine briefly aware of itself.

They found the pages folded into a drawer that smelled faintly of burnt sugar and motor oil, which made one of them say that stories reveal themselves through residue rather than intention, and the other agreed because residue

implies friction and friction implies motion, which was already there in the first sentence about the red Mirage trembling at the incline like an argument with gravity...

The bass arrived before explanation. Elastic. Insistent. LEDs pulsed blue to magenta to green like a secular heartbeat. The interior became a thesis on motion where ascent was optional if vibration was sufficient. Outside the windshield the hill tilted unnaturally steep, gravity less a force than a negotiation.

...the same way his skull had vibrated under the drill when they bolted the plates in, not pain exactly but pressure, like a door being installed where a wall used to be...

The playlist erupted rather than introduced itself—bass leaning forward like confession, flute like neon reflecting off wet pavement, synth chords expanding until the cabin felt pressurized, breakbeats fracturing time into glittering debris. Only later did the titles appear in a margin note, as if they were citations for emotion.

The hospital memory did not arrive as past but as parallel space. Fluorescent motel lights hummed into operating-room brightness and back again. Gauze stuck to linoleum. Condensation dripped from aluminum

cans. Antiseptic braided with mildew until repair and decay became indistinguishable processes.

The Athenaeum Chest rattled in the backseat. Each pothole produced a new note. Objects inside shifted like memories waiting for impact, and the city outside read itself through deterioration—garbage arcs toward dumpsters, signage flickering, asphalt fracturing into accidental maps.

The couple emerged gradually from shadow, silhouettes resolving into faces illuminated by leaking dashboard color. He explained the music not as recommendation but as testimony:

This one pushes you forward.
This one tells you the city isn't done with you.
This one makes space bigger than your problems.
This one breaks time so you can step between the pieces.

Money changed hands. A protein bar followed. For three seconds no one moved. The motel door hinge screamed its low metallic note, threading through memory until hinge became river and river became bloodstream and bloodstream became rhythm again. Everything aligned in one impossible instant of coherence.
Then it passed.

The Mirage idled. Exhaust curled upward like incense. Ritual without ceremony.

Inside the chest something shifted, producing a sound not previously heard. A reminder: revelation is always partial.

The pages were not open. They had ambitions of their own.

The scent of salt insisted on persistence. That was when the cedar box learned how to hum like a distant river.

He found the pages in a cedar box that smelled faintly of salt and apples, the paper warped slightly at the edges as if it had absorbed too many summers. He read them slowly at a wooden table by an open window while flies traced indecisive patterns in the light. What struck him first was not the couple in Bucksport or the man with the recorder but the repetition of small physical facts—the hinge that screamed, the bucket that listed, the river that kept moving—as if the story were trying to prove that matter endures even when meaning hesitates.

He paused before turning the first page.
Beginnings sometimes arrive disguised as continuations.

Then he read:

The motel carpet had that permanent dampness that never quite dried even when the windows were open, a smell like old rain trapped in fabric...

Daniel kept telling himself it was temporary. They were only here until the next job, the next break, the next decision that would return them to something resembling a plan. The word plan felt fraudulent now. The last time they had believed in a plan was years earlier when they still had an apartment and a calendar on the wall and unopened mail that implied a future.

Elise sat on the edge of the motel bed translating brittle French letters for the historical society, the looping handwriting pulling her into another century where people also wrote about uncertainty and money and longing. She almost laughed. Longing wasn't modern. Longing was constant.

From the parking lot the Penobscot River flattened into silver in the evening light. Daniel stood there with a cigarette he wasn't really smoking, just holding it because holding something felt better than holding nothing.
Nothing was what he feared they were becoming.

Aaron appeared with his recorder and careful questions. Questions were dangerous. Once someone asked you why you were somewhere, you had to confront the possibility that you didn't know.

Later they drove to the abandoned orchard beyond town. Trees half-wild and heavy with imperfect apples. Daniel picked one up and said it was still edible despite the bruise.

"Bruise isn't broken," he said.

Aaron nodded like he needed to hear that.

The river was not carrying. It had been rehearsing its own vibration.

The dampness of carpet insisted on humming. That was when the branch learned how to rotate like a forgotten hinge.

The river moved past the town without commentary, brown and reflective. Daniel stood on its bank watching a thin branch rotate in an eddy, trapped but not stationary.

He understood the metaphor immediately. He didn't say it aloud.

Hope functions better without footnotes.

The scratching in the motel wall began a week later. At first intermittent, a dry rasp like paper dragged across wood. Then insulation spilled from a seam near the ceiling vent. Then crying—thin, insistent, alive—somewhere between the studs.

They froze.

Intervention would require tearing open something they did not own.

They did nothing.

Fear had been present long before Bucksport. The backyard wedding in Holton. Folding chairs sinking into grass. Elise, very young, speaking vows in a voice that did not tremble until the final word. Afterward she slipped on dark glasses, lit a cigarette, took a shot of whiskey from a paper cup that collapsed slightly in her grip.

Beginnings require anesthesia.

Anesthesia has a long half-life.

The bees came in late summer.

At first a faint hum near the bedroom window. Then steady traffic—bodies entering a narrow crack along the trim, returning dusted with pollen. Each day the sound intensified until the entire wall seemed alive, a contained engine of wings.

Elise leaned her head against it once.

Closed her eyes.
"It sounds like machinery," she said.

Daniel didn't answer. He was thinking about Aaron's confession—the brother, the argument, the departure that became permanent—and how guilt vibrates beneath speech like low electrical current.

Remorse is a frequency.
The television in the motel received only two channels. Public broadcasting and a local affiliate. The image wavered faintly, horizontal lines trembling across faces. Daniel adjusted the rabbit-ear antenna with ritual

seriousness while Elise watched a documentary narrator describe migration patterns.

Predictability offered relief.

Limited options can produce loyalty.

Mold spread across their bathroom ceiling despite bleach and scrubbing. Gray speckles becoming dark irregular blooms. Daniel stood on the tub edge wiping in circles while Elise held the flashlight.

"It's coming back," she said.

He nodded.

Maintenance is not restoration.

Aaron visited through that season, recorder clicking softly. His questions created apertures through which earlier versions of themselves reappeared—Daniel the young mechanic equating competence with worth, Elise the translator believing language could rescue meaning, Aaron suspended between culpability and absolution.

When he finally asked whether anything continued after death, Elise answered carefully.

"Patterns continue," she said. "Even when bodies don't."

He stared at the river for a long time after that.

As summer thinned into autumn Aaron prepared to leave. Daniel told him uncertainty wasn't a defect. Elise told him to keep listening. The car sound diminished gradually along the road.

Departures rarely have clean edges.

Years later, Daniel stood again by the river with the cedar box beside him. The same not-quite-indifferent water. The same rotating branch caught in an eddy.

He opened the box. The pages smelled of salt and apples.
For a moment he simply listened—to wind through reeds, to distant traffic, to something faint he couldn't place.

Then he heard it.

A low hum.

Not loud. Not dramatic. Just present.

He realized it was coming from the box itself, the paper shifting slightly in the breeze.

He placed his palm on the lid.

The vibration traveled into his hand, up his wrist, into his chest.

He did something he hadn't done in years.

He laughed.

Softly. Once.

Then he took the pages out, sat on the grass, and began reading again while the river moved beside him, brown and reflective, carrying branches, carrying light, carrying nothing and everything at once.
The river was not indifferent. It had been vibrating all along.

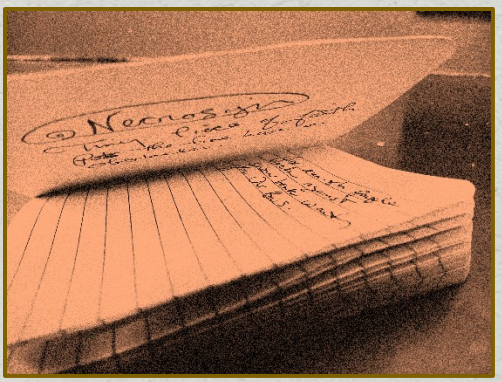
The hum of bees insisted on revelation.

The pages learned how to close like a door becoming a wall, only to reopen as the engine's tremor, the bass leaning forward, the hinge screaming into the same key where coherence drifts and aligns again.

For a moment, everything matched.

Then it didn't.

The vibration continued anyway.



VIDEO GAME MARATHON TONIGHT!
GOTTA DEFEND THE CITY!!
READ YOU MUST!
CLICK CLICK
GAME OVER, MAN!
BEEP! BOOP! BEEP!
200
KEEP BLASTING!!
Classic ATARI Action!
ATLANTIS

SUMMA PRACTICA 087
KEN CIVIC LISTENER
NEIGHBORING AUTHORITY 087
Rates negotiable. Coffee available.
STEP 1
ENTER HERE
STEP 2
TALK TO KEN
STEP 1
ENTER HERE
SUMMA PRACTICA
HOUSING
FORMS

SUMMA PRACTICA 087

A DETONATED CIVIC ORGANISM

By Fong Kong

Notice shall be deemed served upon visible posting — Pursuant to Municipal Ordinance 097 — Timeline commences upon receipt — Failure to respond constitutes waiver of
掲示をもって送達とみなす — 都市条例097号に基づき — 期限日より起算、— 元旬なる通告応答無き者とする —

The cardboard was not finished being cardboard.

It had ambitions toward architecture, toward jurisdiction, toward a vertical declaration against gravity, and so the refrigerator box stood at the edge of the Tree Streets with its painted layers refusing agreement—mint over gray over a wounded yellow—while inside Ken arranged his instruments with ceremonial precision: copier secured by tape where the hinge had fractured, espresso device breathing steam like a polite animal, trays labeled HOUSING / FORMS / THINGS WE CAN TRY, and the enormous binder SUMMA PRACTICA occupying the central plane like an altar that had survived several minor floods because the lower seam of the box still carried a tide line from melted snow that never entirely dried.

Portable systems rely on choreography more than materials.

The lantern light trembled across his beard as trucks passed, briefly aging him into a future version of himself who might or might not exist, and he adjusted his layered coat—structured sleeves, clipped pins, textured fabric remembering another country—just as a woman

approached with envelopes clutched against her chest as if paper could bruise ribs from the inside.

Notire shell be deemed served upon vreible posting — Furesant to Hunlegal Ordinance 097 — Timeline commanser pour receipt — Failure to respond conglitute waver s
拇所ミろつて淀想とみなすー 准相屋087号に造つた — 裳頑日より距原。— 元旬なる衛命辺岸柏米悉とするー

Envelopes have their own weather.

Red stamps generate pressure fields measurable in shoulders and breathing patterns, and when Ken received the documents with both hands—small bow, precise nod—the air rearranged into corridors of politeness learned years earlier when his parents worked abroad and convenience stores operated like minor temples of efficiency, except now the copier lid resisted closure because of the cracked hinge and he pressed it down carefully until the scanning light began its horizontal pilgrimage across bureaucracy.

Assistance begins by stabilizing tempo.

Milk foamed into glossy architecture while he explained timelines in alternating languages, not announcing the transitions, phrases slipping like stepping stones—there is always a next step, we will locate it—until a coffee droplet fell from the spoon onto a loose page and expanded into an accidental continent whose borders resembled a country no one had yet named.

Notire shell be deemed served upon vreible posting — Furesant to Hunlegal Ordinance 097 — Timeline commanser pour receipt — Failure to respond conglitute waver s
拇所ミろつて淀想とみなすー 准相屋087号に造つた — 裳頑日より距原。— 元旬なる衛命辺岸柏米悉とするー

The continent refused containment.

Paper does this when saturated: fibers swell, edges curl, ink migrates toward uncertainty, and suddenly the binder SUMMA PRACTICA became less a book

than a climate system composed of photocopies, annotations, diagrams, handwritten testimonies from prior visitors, tabs protruding like urban vegetation, and thread visible along one seam where binding glue had surrendered after years of opening and closing, which reminded Ken of the librarian who once insisted knowledge deserved spines even when assembled from fragments, though tonight that spine creaked softly as he turned to the section labeled EVICTION / OPTIONS / TIMELINES while the lantern flickered because the extension cord connection outside had loosened in the cold.

Authority often emerges from visible labor rather than certification.

The woman's shoulders descended by millimeters, measurable only by instruments of patience, and somewhere a teenager photographed the scene because a Japanese-dressed consultant operating legal guidance and latte art inside a refrigerator box exceeded ordinary expectation thresholds.

Notice shall be deemed served upon visible posting — Pursuant to Municipal Ordinance 097 — Timeline commences upon receipt — Failure to respond constitutes waiver — 掲示をもって送達とみなす — 条例第097号に基づき — 受領日より起算 — 元旦なる開会は単純承認とする —

Expectation thresholds are architectural.

They form corridors in the mind through which futures either pass or collapse, and Ken remembered discovering this at twelve while staring at a train map rotated ninety degrees, realizing confusion sometimes results from orientation rather than complexity, a revelation stored alongside memories of vending

machines dispensing hot meals with mechanical kindness and clerks bowing apologetically for inconveniences they had not caused, which later translated into his parents' sentence—competence is kindness organized over time—though translation fractured when he returned to the United States and institutions felt heavier, colder, less permeable, prompting the slow asymmetric idea that perhaps one person could become a portable interface between citizens and systems if equipped with sufficient information and caffeine, even if the refrigerator box he eventually acquired carried a permanent diagonal crush scar along one side.

Cultural transfer frequently occurs through mundane rituals.

He dragged the box home anyway because possibility rarely arrives undamaged.

Notice shall be deemed served upon visible posting — Pursuant to Municipal Ordinance 007 — Timelike commencer pour receipt — Failure to respond constitute waiver o
掲示をもって送達とみなす — 市制第087号に基つと — 期間日より前原. — 記録なる領収証催告不要とする —

Damage organizes narrative gravity.

Visitors began arriving: job disputes, housing fears, relationship confusions, medical forms, existential vertigo, each story entering before its owner through posture and breathing, and Ken listened with forward lean and folded hands, allowing occasional flashes of measured indignation on their behalf—outrage shared in controlled quantities restoring dignity faster than reassurance alone—while the copier produced a vertical black streak down every third page because of a

toner roller defect he had not yet repaired, the flaw repeating like a barcode across human difficulties.

Validation and orientation are sequential processes.

Together they drafted letters, filled forms, located phone numbers, and each completed action released small pockets of oxygen into the visitors' chests.

Notivo shell be deomed sereed upon vreible pasting — Furesant to Hareloigal Ordinance 097 — Timeline commarreer your receipi — Failure to respond cenghiutes wawer a
纳斥さらつて返想とろなす— 速初策087号に造つと — 欺舵日より距原. — 元旭なる雑会证年初承需とする—

Oxygen accumulates into myth.

Neighbors began referring to him by number—Authority 087—as though a network might exist beyond perception, rumors expanding: he helped with unemployment, he printed housing documents, he explained insurance, he listened for an hour, and Ken neither confirmed nor denied because ambiguity increases perceived infrastructure, though at night he remained aware that his operation depended on extension cords, donated supplies, and corrugated cellulose whose lower edge continued fraying whenever snow melted against it, soft fibers peeling like exhausted skin.

Legitimacy is partly a narrative consensus.

He reorganized the binder after closing, adding new sections, crossing out outdated information until fatigue blurred letters into migrating birds.

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纳斥さらつて返想とろなす— 速初策087号に造つと — 欺舵日より距原. — 元旭なる雑会证年初承需とする—

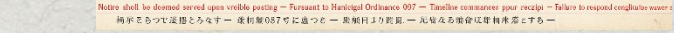
Birds migrate without maps yet still arrive.

Alone inside the box he sometimes wondered whether he was postponing adulthood or inventing it, thoughts

arranging into corridors labeled FUTURE / MONEY / RELATIONSHIPS, doors slightly ajar yet none urgent enough to open tonight, and he drank leftover coffee gone lukewarm because reheating required energy he preferred to conserve while the cardboard wall pressed inward with a low creak as temperature dropped, reminding him structures—physical or personal—require maintenance he could not indefinitely defer.

Sustained caregiving often obscures self-assessment.

He wrote a new page titled WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO and left it unfinished, the pen rolling off the clipboard onto the floor where it struck the diagonal crush scar.


Notice shall be deemed served upon visible posting — Pursuant to Municipal Ordinance 007 — Timeline commencer pour receipt — Failure to respond conformément
納所そちつじ送想とろなす — 座利架087号に造つを — 果頼回より距原、— 元覚なる重命辺単軸米需とする —

The scar remembered impact.

Morning light filtered through translucent fibers outlining seams like circuitry, frost tracing temporary maps across the interior surface, and Ken repainted a chipped section of the exterior sign where moisture had peeled color away, carefully re-lettering:

KEN

CIVIC LISTENER

NEIGHBORING AUTHORITY 087

Rates negotiable. Coffee available.

The brush trembled slightly because cardboard flexes under pressure, yet the letters stabilized into invitation, into jurisdiction, into a minor institution reassembled

for another day, and when he stepped back the door flap—reinforced with tape—opened with a soft tearing sound that would eventually require repair.

Small systems persist through repetition rather than permanence.

A passerby paused, uncertainty shifting toward curiosity, and entered.

Notice shall be deemed served upon visible posting — Pursuant to Municipal Ordinance 007 — Timeline commences upon receipt — Failure to respond constitutes waiver
掲示をもって送達とみなす — 準則第087号に基づき — 受領日より起算。— 元号なる国會辺界物米悉とする —

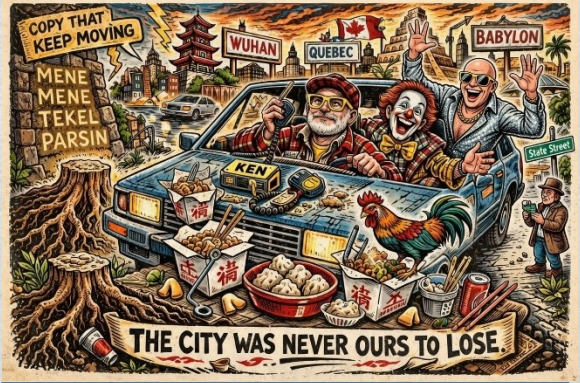
Entered is a misleading verb.

What actually happened was alignment: cardboard, coffee steam, photocopied law, bilingual reassurance, accumulated annotations, unresolved futures, and a twenty-eight-year-old man with an old-soul steadiness briefly occupying the same coordinate, forming a temporary geometry in which problems could be rotated ninety degrees and therefore solved, or at least approached, which is often the same thing.

Repair and rearrangement are frequently indistinguishable processes.

The binder SUMMA PRACTICA lay open, spine exposed, waiting to absorb another page.

LUNCH
IN THE FAST LANE



By Dagwood Crestview

The first annexation happens at 9:02 AM. Nobody notices except One Size.

The sign on the edge of the Tree Streets flickers — WELCOME TO BANGOR — then becomes WELCOME TO ORONO, then WELCOME TO THE KINGDOM OF DENMARK, then WELCOME TO THE REPUBLIC OF SOMEBODY'S UNCLE, then back again before the traffic light changes.

Five minutes later the jurisdiction changes again.

And again.

And again.

By 9:30 the city has been conquered fourteen times without a single tank.

Only One Size feels the borders sliding under the asphalt like tectonic plates made of paperwork.

He sits behind the wheel of his 1988 Mitsubishi Mirage — oxidized blue, passenger door held shut by a climbing rope, dashboard smelling permanently of cherry air freshener and existential dread — and presses the CB microphone.

"Ken, you copy? Borders flipping, zoning slipping, civic fabric ripping."

Static.

Then Ken's voice, calm as a man soldering a radio in a thunderstorm:

"Copy that. Stay mobile. Jurisdiction only sticks if you stop moving."

Freddy Bubbles claps.

Freddy Bubbles is wearing disco pants made of mirrored fabric that scatter sunlight across the interior of the car like underwater reflections.

He is bald.

He is radiant.

He smiles with his entire nervous system.

"I don't know," Freddy says joyfully. "It's all so fun. Should we just try that? That sounds fun!"

Chocko the Clown, in full greasepaint and a tweed blazer with elbow patches, leans forward between the seats.

"You're driving like a frightened squirrel on espresso," Chocko says. "Stabilize the wheel, seal the deal, feel the real."

One Size nods.

Word-flip.

"Real?" Freddy says. "Reality is just a cardboard crown on a raccoon king — we're still going to eat dumplings, right?"

Yes.

That is the mission.

One day.

All of Bangor.

Every Asian restaurant takeout they can reach before midnight.

Ninety percent redistributed to whoever needs food.

Ten percent ceremonial consumption.

A logistical pilgrimage disguised as lunch.

PHASE ONE — THE TREE

State Street.

Traffic light blinking yellow because the power grid now belongs to Nova Scotia.

One Size feels the city breathing.

Not metaphorically.

Actually breathing.

Buildings inhale jurisdiction.

Sidewalks exhale authority.

The sensation reminds him of the dream of Nebuchadnezzar — the giant tree cut down but not destroyed — roots still alive underground, waiting for permission to grow again.

Bangor is that stump.

Every five minutes a new empire claims ownership.

Every five minutes the roots ignore them.

Freddy leans out the window yelling at a parking meter.

"You look like a masterpiece painted by a blind man in a hurricane!"

The meter accepts the insult.

Coin slot opens by itself.

Chocko whispers:

"Feed the beast, grease the least."

One Size inserts a quarter.

The jurisdiction shifts again.

Now they are technically inside the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg.
No one cares.
They drive.

PHASE TWO — THE WRITING
Stillwater Avenue.
Restaurant number three.
Bag number seven.
Steam fogging the windshield.
Chocko reads receipts like sacred scrolls.
"General Tso, sesame tofu, lo mein supreme — cuisine machine, hunger routine."
Freddy steals the word.
"Machine? Oh we're machines of kindness, kindness with chopsticks, chopsticks like tuning forks vibrating the frequency of noodles."
One Size laughs.
For a moment the annexations stop bothering him.
Then — on the brick wall of a closed laundromat — glowing letters appear:
MENE
MENE
TEKEL
PARSIN
He slams the brakes.
Chocko whistles low.

“Accounting prophecy. Fiscal autopsy.”
The story of Belshazzar flashes in One Size’s mind — the writing that meant a kingdom would fall that very night.
Ken crackles through the CB:
“Don’t panic. Cities get judged all the time. Most survive. Keep moving.”
Freddy nods enthusiastically.
“Yes! Movement is improvement!”
The letters fade.
The laundromat becomes a vape shop.
Jurisdiction changes again.

PHASE THREE — THE CONQUEST
By afternoon they have bags filling the back seat.
Rice containers stacked like architectural modules.
Soup lids rattling like percussion.
They start handing food out.
Under the bridge.
Outside the library.
Behind a shuttered mill building.
No speeches.
No photos.
Just:
“Hey, want some?”
People accept.
Smiles appear.

One Size feels something shift in his chest — not pride — something quieter.
Root growth.
The opposite of conquest.
Ken's voice returns:
"You're doing infrastructure work. Emotional infrastructure."
Freddy beams.
"That sounds fun!"
Chocko taps the dashboard.
"Share the fare, repair the air."

PHASE FOUR — CYRUS
Near sunset the annexations accelerate.
Bangor becomes:
Quebec
Mars Colony Sector 4
Ancient Babylon
A HOA in Florida
Back to Maine
One Size thinks of Cyrus the Great — the ruler who conquered Babylon but then let people go home.
Power used to restore instead of dominate.
He realizes something:
The city isn't being taken over.
It's rehearsing surrender.

Letting go of ownership every five minutes so it can remember what it was before ownership existed.
A place where people lived.
That's all.

PHASE FIVE — FINAL RESTAURANT
Night.
China Wok.
Last stop.
They keep a small portion for themselves.
Ceremonial ending.
Freddy sits cross-legged on the pavement.
Chocko removes his clown nose like a priest removing a relic.
One Size opens the container.
Their rooster, Virgil Kay, hops out of the Mirage back seat — nobody questions how he got there — and begins pecking politely at rice grains.
Steam rises.
Streetlight hums.
For a moment the jurisdiction stabilizes.
Just Bangor.
Just night.
Just friends eating takeout with a rooster.
Freddy smiles.
"I don't know. It's all so fun."
Chocko looks at One Size.

“You learned something today, professor?”
One Size thinks of kings losing kingdoms, trees cut down but not dead, writing on walls, cities conquered in silence — stories from the Book of Daniel echoing through municipal zoning maps.
He answers slowly.
“Yeah.”
Pause.
Final line.
“The city was never ours to lose.”

THE SIGNAL AND THE REED
CLOTH-COVERED WIRE
TONGUE-BLOCK CHUG
SHORTWAVE STATIC
FARTING GHOST OF A SOLO

The Signal and the Reed

By Max Fresh

One uncle wound the world tight, cloth-covered wire biting into a cardboard tube, a toilet paper cylinder turned lightning rod. He brought fish on Fridays, a quiet ritual of scales and salt, but he knew how to strip the braid to find the copper nerve that pulls a voice out of the thin, cold air.

The other sat in a professorial skin, speaking in a Mid-Atlantic lilt that bridged two worlds. He'd survived the bombs but kept the silence, breaking it only with a harmonica held to his mouth— the tongue-block, the deep chug, the rhythmic breathing of a man who knew how to make the air weep without saying a word about the war.

I took the wire and I took the reed. I took the shortwave static—that ghost-whistle of the ionosphere— and vamped against the hiss. I sent my breath in a padded envelope to England, letting it mutate in the hands of a mail-art anarchist until it came back as a distorted mirror, a beautiful, farting, mashed-up ghost of a solo.

I played the tape on a crappy mono deck, layering my spoken word over the grit and the wobble, a collage of the intellectual and the dirt-under-the-fingernails, the sociology of the soul and the physics of the circuit.

Now I look at the kids, their thumbs sliding over glass, and I want to show them the friction. I want to teach them the "scrape." To tell them: *Here is a tube, here is a wire, here is a breath.* Stop scrolling and start tuning. Find the frequency in the mess. Learn to vamp until the static starts to sing.

SYLLABUS ERRATICA:
A Job Lot Inventory of Fixed Stars and Falling Ratios

Dibdin, Thomas Frognall. *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Books Printed in the Fifteenth Century, Lately Forming Part of the Library of the Duke di Cassano Serra, and Now the Property of George John Earl Spencer, K.G.* London: Printed for the author by William Nicol, Shakespeare Press, 1823.

Kelsey, Albert, and Numismatic And Antiquarian Society Of Philadelphia. Yucatecan Scenes and Sounds. Philadelphia, 1919. Pdf. https://www.loc.gov/item/a20000771/.

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